

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In Re Application of:	)	
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Inventors: Lena Sojian et al.	)	
	)	
Serial No.: 10/777,347	)	ATTORNEY FILE NO.
	)	SLA1473
	)	
Filed: February 12, 2004	)	
	)	Conf. No.: 5085
Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR	)	Customer No.: 55,286
VARIABLE TEXT OVERLAY	)	Examiner: Dulaney,
	)	Benjamin
	)	Art Unit: 2625

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Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences  
United States Patent and Trademark Office  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

BRIEF ON APPEAL

This is an appeal from the rejection by Examiner Benjamin G. Dulaney, Group Art Unit 2625, of claims 1-5, 7-11, 17-21, and 23-31 as set forth in the CLAIMS APPENDIX.

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### **REAL PARTY IN INTEREST**

The real party in interest is Sharp Laboratories of America, Inc., as assignee of the present application in the United States Patent Office, with a recordation date of February 12, 2004 at Reel 014988, Frame 0250.

### **RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES**

None.

### **STATUS OF THE CLAIMS**

Claims 6 and 22 are canceled.

Claims 1-5, 7-21, and 23-31 are in the application.

Claims 1-5, 7-21, and 23-31 are rejected.

Claims 1-5, 7-21, and 23-31 are appealed.

### **STATUS OF AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to the claims were presented in a paper received at the PTO on September 21, 2008. These claim amendments have been entered.

### **SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER**

The claimed invention advantageously makes use of the printer pipeline to parallel-process a document, and so speed the merger of two rasterized data images. A fax, scanner, and copier all use the same pathway, referred to herein as a copier pipeline, to convert the scan of a paper medium document into a rasterized image. It is known to use a multifunctional peripheral (MFP) to merge different rasterized images. In an MFP, the creation of merged image is conventionally a serial process where the first image must be saved and subsequently added to a second image (e.g., the Tanaka reference). It is possible to generate raster image data from another source, however, if the source is a text message. In that case, the text message can be treated as a word processing application (e.g., Word) document and converted into a Page Description Language (PDL) document. Ultimately as part of the printing process, the MFP converts the PDL file into rasterized data using the printer pipeline. The claimed invention recognizes that PDL files can be used as a document source in an MFP document merger process. That is, every source document need not necessarily be scanned/copied at the MFP. The claimed invention also recognizes that the printer pipeline can be used in parallel with the copier/scanner pipeline. The Applicant believes they are the first to use the printer pipeline in the process of merging two rasterized images at an MFP.

Claim 17 recites an MFP 100 with a text overlaying system (specification, page 4, ln. 1, through page 5, ln. 12, see Fig. 1). The system 102 includes a copier pipeline (first subsystem) 104 having an interface on line 106 to accept a document and an interface on line 108 to supply a first image of a rasterized document (page 4, ln. 2-5, and page 5, ln. 3-6). A

print pipeline (second subsystem) 110 has an interface on line 112 to accept a text overlay message (page 4, ln. 5-7, and page 5, ln. 5-6). The print pipeline 110 converts the overlay message to a PDL file, processes the PDL file as a print job, and supplies a second image of overlay rasterized data on line 114 (page 5, ln. 6-9).

A merge unit 116 has interfaces on lines 108 and 114 to accept the rasterized data from the copier and print pipelines (page 4, ln. 7-9). The merge unit 116 merges the overlay message (from the print pipeline) with the document (from the copier pipeline) and supplies a merged document at an interface on line 118 (page 4, ln. 9-10, page 5, ln. 10-12).

Claim 1 recites a text overlay method associated with an MFP (specification: page 8, ln. 10, through page 9, ln. 2, see Fig. 4). In Step 402 a copier pipeline accepts a document (page 8, ln. 10). Step 402b converts the document to a rasterized image (page 8, ln. 19-20). Step 402c generates a first image (page 8, ln. 20). In Step 404 the print pipeline accepts an electronically formatted text overlay message (page 8, ln. 13 and 22). Step 404b converts the overlay message into a PDL file (page 8, ln. 22-23). Step 404c processes the PDL file as a print job (page 8, ln. 23-24). Step 404d generates a second image (page 8, ln. 24-25). Step 406 merges the first image with the second image (page 8, ln. 13-14 and page 8, ln. 26 through page 9, ln. 1). Step 408 creates a merged document (page 8, ln. 14-15).

**GROUND OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL**

1. Whether claims 1-5, 7-11, 17-21, and 24-26 are unpatentable under 35 U.S.C 103(a) with respect to Pentecost et al. (“Pentecost”; US 6,919,967) in view of Tanaka.
2. Whether claims 13 and 28 are unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) with respect to Pentecost and Tanaka, in view of Miura et al. (“Miura”; US 7, 126,704).
3. Whether claims 14, 16, 29, and 31 are unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) with respect to Pentecost and Tanaka, in view of Parnian et al. (“Parnian”; US 6,538,623).

## ARGUMENT

*1. The rejection of claims 1-5, 7-11, 17-21, and 24-26 under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as unpatentable with respect to Pentecost et al. ("Pentecost"; US 6,919,967) in view of Tanaka (US 5,959,743).*

### CLAIMS 1 and 17

In Section 1 of the Final Office Action claims 1-5, 7-11, 17-21, and 24-26 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as unpatentable with respect to Pentecost et al. ("Pentecost"; US 6,919,967) in view of Tanaka (US 5,959,743). With respect to claims 1 and 17, the Office Action acknowledges that Pentecost fails to disclose a copier pipeline, but that Tanaka discloses such a feature, and that it would have been obvious to combine Tanaka with Pentecost to have an image processing apparatus with an image overlaying mechanism by which image data from an inputting means source are overlaid with image data stored in memory.

The Applicant respectfully submits that Pentecost fails to disclose the limitation of document merger, as recited in the claimed invention. Pentecost discloses a Variable Data Publishing (VDP) system that disassembles "static" text/images and variable data from a document, and downloads the static and variable data as separate entities to speed the printing process (col. 4, ln. 10-14). The analyzing software 26 first analyzes the pages from an application (i.e., a document) and identifies static page aspects and variable pages aspects, converts the static and

variable pages to static data and variable data, and automatically identifies a static page layout (col. 6, ln. 31-39). A static page layout is a block of text or graphics that can be used as the background of each page in a multi-page document (col. 4, ln. 19-43). The analyzing software 26 analyzes pages from program 28 (in RAM 22) to identify static and variable aspects, converts the static and variable pages to static page layout objects and variable print data, and creates a PostScript or PCL data stream that is downloaded to the page printer 18 (col. 7, ln. 37-57).

More explicitly, Pentecost discloses a DMU 50 for merging static page objects with variable print data, noting that additional details of the DMU 50 can be found in Vondram et al. US 5,940,585 ("Vondram") (col. 7, ln. 8-15). Generally, Vondram disclose a print data processing pipeline that employs parallel paths to handle compressed data (Vondram, col. 6, ln. 25-42). By partitioning the first data stream 201 from the second data stream 202, processing of the data elements can be optimized (Fig. 1, col. 7, ln. 33-39). Some of the print data includes information compressed using a lossy format and other information compressed using a lossless format. Rather than serially processing, Vondram partitions the input page into lossy page strips and lossless page strips. After processing, the composite page strips are (re)combined (col. 8, ln. 1-39).

"The function of the merge operation 13 is to combine, pixel by pixel, these two raster print data streams so that the original image, previously split into lossless and lossy page strip elements, is reconstructed for the color plane being processed (col. 15, ln. 60-64)."



As with the DMU disclosed by Pentecost, Vondram discloses a “merger” operation which merely recombines a job that was received as a single entitle and temporarily broken apart for ease of processing. Pentecost and Vondram do not describe a process for merging 2 jobs that were originally received as separate entities, via different pipelines.

While Vondram’s job is disassembled into lossy and lossless components, Pentecost’s document is disassembled into static and variable components, and the static page layout objects and variable print data are sent to the printer in a single data stream with a header that identifies the static page layout and variable page data (col. 7, ln. 50-54). As with Vondram, the original document has *not* been merged with another document, just disassembled and reassembled.

Tanaka discloses an overlay function that simultaneously writes and reads data into memory. As data is being read out of memory, the written data “overlays” the already read data (Abstract and claim 1). Tanaka uses the term “overlay” to describe a process where old data is replaced with new data (i.e. “overwrite”).

More explicitly, Tanaka discloses an image processing apparatus with a scanner 100, fax unit 304, memory 303, and selector 305, see Fig. 1. Selector unit 305 is able to select data from the scanner unit 100, memory unit 303, and facsimile unit 304, and the selected data is sent to the image forming unit 200 (col. 4, ln. 29-32).

As shown in FIG. 5, the memory controller 41 stores the overlaid image data at the address from which the overlaid image data previously read out (sic). Therefore, when the image overlaying is finished, the data in the image

memory is rewritten to the overlaid image data” col. 5, ln. 38-42).

The Advisory Action of March 4, 2009 states that Tanaka discloses “data from memory (printer pipeline) is merged with data from the scanner (copier pipeline) using an OR circuit.” In traverse, it is noted that a memory is not a print pipeline. In fact, Tanaka’s apparatus appears to be unable to process PDL documents by converting them into raster images. Tanaka disclose his apparatus as a digital copier, not a printer (col. 3, ln. 28-30).

The Applicant is not entirely sure of the meaning of “overlaid image”, as used by Tanaka, due to the poor translation of the application. It is possible that Tanaka only partially overwrites one image with another image, in which case the overwritten image in memory is a form of merger. If this assumption is correct, Tanaka is able to merge images using a serial process that copies one image into memory, and partially overwrites the stored image with a second image. However, Tanaka does not use a text message or PDL file as an image source. Neither does Tanaka use a print pipeline as part of his merging process.

An invention is unpatentable if the differences between it and the prior art would have been obvious at the time of the invention. As stated in MPEP § 2143, the *KSR International Co. v Teleflex Inc.* decision (82 USPQ2d 1385, 1395-1397, 2007) suggests 7 exemplary rationales to support a conclusion of obviousness, which include:

- A) Combining prior art elements according to known methods to yield predictable results;
- B) Simple substitution of one known element for another to obtain predictable results;
- C) Use of known technique to improve similar devices (methods, or products) in the same way;
- D) Applying a known technique to a known device (method, or product) ready for improvement to yield predictable results;
- E) “Obvious to try” – choosing from a finite number of identified, predictable solutions, with a reasonable expectation of success;
- F) Known work in one field of endeavor may prompt variations of it for use in either the same field or a different one based on design incentives or other market forces if the variations are predictable to one of ordinary skill in the art;
- G) Some teaching, suggestion, or motivation in prior art would have lead one of ordinary skill to modify the prior art reference or the combine prior art references teachings to arrive at the claimed invention.

The Office Action states that modifications to Pentecost would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art in light of Tanaka. This rejection appears to be most closely grounded in the G) rationale - Some teaching, suggestion, or motivation in prior art would have lead one of ordinary skill to modify the prior art reference or the combine prior art references teachings to arrive at the claimed invention.

With respect to this rationale, MPEP 2143 (G) states that the rejection must articulate the following criteria to resolve the *Graham* factual analysis:

(1) a finding that there was some teaching, suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or combine reference teachings;

(2) a finding that there was a reasonable expectation of success; and

(3) whatever additional findings based on the Graham factual inquiries may be necessary, in view of the facts of the case under consideration, to explain a conclusion of obviousness.

With respect to the above-referenced first factual analysis criteria, the Tanaka reference has been combined with Pentecost based upon the assumption that the combination discloses every limitation recited in Applicant's claims 1 and 17. However as noted above, Pentecost does not disclose a process that merges images from two different sources. More explicitly, Pentecost does not merge an image processed via a copier pipeline with an image processed via the print pipeline. If Tanaka discloses a document merger process, it is not one that converts a text message into a PDL for processing via a pipeline. Neither does Tanaka disclose a document merging processes that relies upon the print pipeline. Therefore, even if Tanaka's copier pipeline is combined with Pentecost, the combination does not explicitly disclose every limitation of claims 1 and 17.

The Office Action states that Tanaka teaches a copier pipeline, and that the merger unit (DMU 50) of Pentecost would not function differently because of the combination of a printer pipeline and

copier pipeline. The Office Action states that it would not matter that the inputs are no longer from the same original file as taught by Pentecost, as they could still be merged pixel by pixel. As noted in detail above, Pentecost's merger unit (DMU 50) does not merge two separate images. The Applicant can find no suggestion that Pentecost's DMU can be combined with a copier pipeline, as the DMU is only able to reconstruct the static and variable components of a single image. Even if Tanaka's copier pipeline is combined with Pentecost's DMU, the DMU does not have the ability to add new data (a second independent image) to the first image.

Pentecost's system is not relevant to the claimed invention, and combination of printer and copiers (i.e. MFP) is well known. So the more relevant question becomes whether it would have been obvious for a practitioner to use a print pipeline to merge a text message with a document created by the copier/scanner. While the simultaneous use of different pipelines may appear obvious in hindsight, the Applicant is unaware of any prior art document reproduction devices that benefited from the use of these limitations at the time of the invention.

The Applicant submits that it is the source of the two documents that point away from the combination of pipelines. Conventionally, the copier/scanner and print functions have been combined to take advantage of the fact that both pipelines can use the same print engine (the subsystem that puts ink to paper). However, the copier/scanner and print pipelines have been maintained as independent subsystems because they have different functions. While the copier/scanner more simplistically creates a pixel-by-pixel raster image,

the printer pipeline includes a software operation that converts a PDL language document into a raster image. Further, the copier/scanner image is created at the MFP itself, while the print document conventionally comes from an external source, such as a network-connected personal computer. The claimed invention recognizes that document from different sources, being processed through different pipelines, can be combined once that are both rasterized.

To support a rejection that it would have been obvious to combine copier and print pipelines for the purpose of document merger, evidence should have been provided in the Office Action that such a modification to Tanaka would have been obvious to one with skill in the art based upon what was well known at the time of the invention. “(A)nalysis [of whether the subject matter of a claim would have been obvious] need not seek out precise teachings directed to the specific subject matter of the challenged claim, for a court can take account of the inferences and creative steps that a person of ordinary skill in the art would employ.” *KSR Int’l Co. v. Teleflex, Inc.*, 127 S. Ct. 1727, 1740-41, 82 USPQ2d 1385, 1396 (2007). However, if the *prima facie* rejection is supported by what was known by a person of ordinary skill in the art then additional evidence should have been provided. Notable, when the source or motivation is not from the prior art references, “the evidence” of motive will likely consist of an explanation or a well-known principle or problem-solving strategy to be applied”. *DyStar*, 464 F.3d at 1366, 80 USPQ2d at 1649. However, the Office Action does not supply evidence that it was well known to combine documents from different sources, using both copier and print pipelines to merge independent files into a combined image.

A *prima facie* analysis of motivation is especially critical in the instant rejection, since the rejection is predicated on limitations that are not explicitly disclosed in the prior art references. The claimed invention can only be obvious if an artisan makes substantial modifications to the Pentecost. However, no evidence has been provided that such a modification would have been obvious based upon well known principles.

With respect to the second analysis criteria needed to support the G) obviousness rationale, even if a practitioner were given the Pentecost and Tanaka references as a foundation, no evidence has been provided to show that there is a reasonable expectation of success in the claimed invention. That is, there can be no reasonable expectation of success if the references, and what was known by artisan at the time of the invention, do not teach all the limitations of the claimed invention.

In summary, the Applicant respectfully submits that a *prima facie* case of obvious has not been supported since the combination of Pentecost and Tanaka does not explicitly disclose every limitation of claims 1 and 17. Neither has a case been supported that Pentecost can be modified to supply the missing limitations in view of Tanaka, or what was well known by a person of skill at the time of the invention.

#### **CLAIMS 2-5, 7-11, 18-21, AND 24-26**

A *prima facie* case for the rejection of claims 1 and 17 has not been supported since the combination of Pentecost and Tanaka does not explicitly disclose or suggest every limitation of claims 1 and 17. Claims

2-5 and 7-11, dependent from claim 1, and claims 18-21 and 24-26, dependent from claim 17, enjoy the same distinctions from the cited prior art, and for the same reasons, cannot be considered obvious in light of the cited art.

**2. *The rejection of claims 13 and 28 as unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) with respect to Pentecost and Tanaka, in view of Miura et al. ("Miura"; US 7, 126,704).***

#### **CLAIMS 13 AND 28**

In Section 14 of the Office Action, claims 13 and 28 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable with respect to Pentecost and Tanaka, in view of Miura et al. ("Miura"; US 7,126,704). The Office Action acknowledges that Pentecost does not teach position commands, but that Miura discloses this feature, and that it would have been obvious to combine references for the purpose of previewing user actions.

The Miura reference has been combined with Pentecost and Tanaka based upon the assumption that Pentecost and Tanaka disclose all the limitations of independent claims 1 and 17. However as noted above, Tanaka and Pentecost do not disclose a means for merging into a single document, separate documents from copier and print pipelines. Miura also fails to teach these limitations. Therefore, even if Miura is combined with Pentecost and Tanaka, the combination still fails to disclose the above-mentioned limitations. Claim 13, dependent from claim 1, and claim 28, dependent from claim 17, enjoy the same advantages.



The Office Action states it would have been obvious to combine references for the purposes of previewing user actions. However, this statement does not explain how a practitioner in the art could have modified the references to yield all the claimed invention limitations. As explained above, even when combined, Pentecost, Tanaka, and Miura fail to disclose all of the claimed invention limitations. The above-quoted statement from Office Action does not explain how even a person with skill in the art could have modified Pentecost's system into one that uses inputs from both a copier and a print pipeline to create a merged document. Alternately stated, the motivation to supply all the limitations missing in the references is not suggested by previewing user actions and combining computer functions. Rather, there must be an explicit teaching in the Miura reference that shows a practitioner how Pentecost can be modified to yield the claimed invention. Such a *prima facie* case has not been made.

**3.     *The rejection of claims 14, 16, 29, and 31 as unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) with respect to Pentecost and Tanaka, in view of Parnian et al. ("Parnian"; US 6,538,623).***

### **CLAIMS 14, 16, 29, AND 31**

In Section 16 of the Office Action, claims 14, 16, 29, and 31 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable with respect to Pentecost and Tanaka, in view of Parnian et al. ("Parnian"; US 6,538,623). The Office Action acknowledges that Pentecost and Tanaka do not teach converting ASCII to PDL, but that Parnian discloses this feature, and

that it would have been obvious to combine references for the purpose of adding timestamps.

The Parnian reference has been combined with Pentecost/Tanaka predicated upon the assumption that Pentecost discloses all the limitations of independent claims 1 and 17. However as noted above, Pentecost and Tanaka do not disclose the processing of independent files via the two pipelines, and the merger of independent files. Parnian also fails to teach these limitations. Therefore, even if Parnian is combined with Pentecost/Tanaka, the combination still fails to disclose the above-mentioned limitations. Claims 14 and 16, dependent from claim 1, and claims 29 and 31, dependent from claim 17, enjoy the same advantages.

The Office Action states it would have been obvious to combine references for the purposes of adding time stamps. However, this statement does not explain how a practitioner in the art could have modified the references to yield all the claimed invention limitations. As explained above, even when combined, Pentecost, Tanaka, and Parnian fail to disclose all of the claimed invention limitations. The above-quoted statement from Office Action does not explain how even a person with skill in the art could have modified Pentecost's system to independent process files for merger using both a copier and a print pipeline. Alternately stated, the motivation to supply all the limitations missing in the references is not suggested by the creation of timestamps. Rather, there must be an explicit teaching in Parnian that show a practitioner how Pentecost and Tanaka can be modified to yield the claimed invention. Such a *prima facie* case has not been made.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

It is submitted that for the reasons pointed out above, the claims in the present application clearly and patentably distinguish over the cited references. Accordingly, the Examiner should be reversed and ordered to pass the case to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 3/14/2009

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## **CLAIMS APPENDIX**

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

1. (previously presented) In a multifunctional peripheral (MFP), a text overlaying method comprising:
  - in a copier pipeline, accepting a document;
  - converting the document to rasterized data;
  - generating a first image;
  - in a print pipeline, accepting an electronically formatted text overlay message;
  - converting the overlay message to a Page Description Language (PDL) file;
  - processing the PDL file as a print job; and,
  - generating a second image as rasterized data;
  - merging the first image with the second image; and,
  - creating a merged document.
2. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:
  - creating a paper media merged document.
3. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein accepting a document includes accepting a document selected from the group including paper media and electronically formatted documents.
4. (original) The method of claim 3 wherein accepting an electronically formatted document includes accepting a document selected from the group including text and image documents.

5. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:  
electronically transmitting the merged document.
6. canceled
7. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein creating the merged document includes generating a third image.
8. (original) The method of claim 7 wherein printing the merged document includes sending the third image to an MFP print engine.
9. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein converting the overlay message to a PDL file includes converting the overlay message to a PDL file selected from the group including Printer Control Language (PCL) and PostScript (PS).
10. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein merging the second image with the first image includes accepting position commands for positioning the second image with respect to the first image.
11. (previously presented) The method of claim 10 wherein merging the second image with the first image includes accepting

message characteristics selection commands chosen from the group including message size, message shape, font, color, and print options.

12. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein accepting message characteristics selection commands includes:  
supplying user interface (UI) message characterization prompts at an MFP front panel; and,  
accepting user commands from the UI.

13. (previously presented) The method of claim 10 wherein accepting position commands for positioning the second image with respect to the first image includes:  
on an MFP display, presenting the first image;  
using a UI associated with the display, supplying prompts for superimposing the second image on the first image;  
receiving user commands on the UI;  
positioning the second image in response to the commands.

14. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein accepting an overlay message includes:  
receiving an ASCII code timestamp, including a date and time, from an MFP controller;  
converting the ASCII code to a timestamp PDL file; and,  
generating a rasterized overlay timestamp message.

15. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein accepting an overlay message includes accepting an overlay message from an

interface selected from the group including a scanner, stylus, smart card, virtual keyboard, and wireless personal digital assistant (PDA) interface.

16. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

generating dynamic data selected from the group including document page count, timestamp, MFP name, and MFP identification (ID); and,

wherein merging the second image with the first image includes additionally merging the dynamic data with the first image.

17. (previously presented) In a multifunctional peripheral (MFP), a text overlaying system comprising:

a copier pipeline having an interface to accept a document and an interface to supply a first image of document rasterized data;

a print pipeline having an interface to accept an electronically formatted text overlay message, the print pipeline converting the overlay message to a Page Description Language (PDL) file and processing the PDL file as a print job, to supply a second image of overlay rasterized data at an interface; and,

a merge unit having an interface to accept the document rasterized data, an interface to accept overlay rasterized data, the merge unit merging the overlay message with the document and supplying a merged document at an interface.

18. (original) The system of claim 17 further comprising:



a print engine having an interface to accept the merged document and an interface to supply a paper media merged document.

19. (previously presented) The system of claim 17 wherein the copier pipeline accepts a document selected from the group including paper media and electronically formatted documents.

20. (previously presented) The system of claim 19 wherein the copier pipeline accepts an electronically formatted document selected from the group including text and image documents.

21. (original) The system of claim 17 further comprising:

a transceiver having an interface to accept the merged document and a network-connected interface to electronically transmit the merged document.

22. canceled

23. (previously presented) The system of claim 17 wherein the merge unit adds the document first image to the overlay second image, and generates a merged document third image.

24. (previously presented) The system of claim 17 wherein the print pipeline converts the overlay message to a PDL file selected from the group including Printer Control Language (PCL) and PostScript (PS).

25. (original) The system of claim 17 wherein the merge unit has a user interface (UI) to accept position commands, and positions the overlay message position with respect to the document position, in response to the position commands.

26. (original) The system of claim 25 wherein the merge unit UI accepts message characteristics selection commands chosen from the group including message size, message shape, font, color, and print options, and modifies the overlay message in response to the selected message characteristics.

27. (original) The system of claim 26 wherein the merge unit UI is enabled as an MFP front panel, including a display and keypad.

28. (original) The system of claim 27 wherein the MFP front panel UI displays an image of the document, supplies prompts for superimposing the overlay message on the document, and accepts user commands; and,

wherein the merge unit positions the overlay message in response to the commands accepted at the MFP front panel UI.

29. (previously presented) The system of claim 17 further comprising:

an MFP controller having an interface to supply an ASCII code timestamp, including a date and time; and,

wherein the print pipeline accepts the timestamp from the MFP controller, converts the ASCII code to a PDL file, and generates a rasterized overlay timestamp message.

30. (previously presented) The system of claim 17 wherein the print subsystem accepts overlay messages using an interface selected from the group including a scanner, stylus, smart card, virtual keyboard, and wireless personal digital assistant (PDA) interfaces.

31. (original) The method of claim 17 further comprising:

an MFP controller having an interface to supply dynamic data selected from the group including document page count, timestamp, MFP name, and MFP identification (ID); and,

wherein the merge unit has an interface to accept the dynamic data and additionally merges the dynamic data with the document.

## **EVIDENCE APPENDIX**

**NONE**

## **RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX**

**NONE**